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PTQ9907

RELEASED IN PART  
B1, 1.4(B), 1.4(D)

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ACTION WHA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACQ-01	DODE-00	DOEE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	H-01
	TEDE-00	INR-00	LAB-01	L-01	ADS-00	AC-01	NSAE-00
	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00
	SP-00	TRSE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00
	SAS-00	/010W					

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R 212046Z MAY 99  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4145  
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO  
AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO  
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA  
AMEMBASSY MEXICO  
AMEMBASSY QUITO  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
AMEMBASSY LIMA  
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN  
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
USINT HAVANA  
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN  
USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
USIA WASHDC 2434  
CIA WASHDC  
DIA WASHDC  
NSC WASHDC

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 001615

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/19/09  
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, VE  
SUBJECT: CHAVEZ ANNOUNCES RESIGNATION OF FIVE MINISTERS WHO WILL  
RUN FOR THE CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY

REF: CARACAS 1594

CLASSIFIED BY POLITICAL COUNSELOR THOMAS A. SHANNON. REASON  
1.5(D).

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: ALAN H FLANIGAN  
CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(B), 1.4(D)  
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 20 MAY 2024  
DATE/CASE ID: 28 FEB 2007 200503244

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## SUMMARY

1. (C) IN A DRAMATIC MOVE DESIGNED TO ELECT A POLO PATRIOTICO MAJORITY TO THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY (ANC) BY STANDING CANDIDATES WITH GREATER NAME RECOGNITION, PRESIDENT CHAVEZ ANNOUNCED THAT FIVE MEMBERS OF HIS CABINET WOULD RESIGN TO RUN FOR THE ANC. THE FIVE ARE: SECRETARY OF THE PRESIDENCY ALFREDO PENA, MINISTER OF INTERIOR (AND CHAVEZ'S POLITICAL GODFATHER) LUIS MIQUILENA, MINISTER OF LABOR LEOPOLDO PUCHI, MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT ATALA URIANA POCATERRA, MINISTER OF TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS LUIS REYES REYES, AND DEPUTY MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE FRANCISCO VISCONTI. CHAVEZ PERSONALLY PRAISED EACH CANDIDATE, SAYING HE IS SENDING THEM IN TO THE FRONTLINE OF THE BATTLE FOR THE ANC. HE SAID HE MAY BE ANNOUNCING MORE RESIGNATIONS BEFORE NEXT FRIDAY, MAY 28--THE DEADLINE FOR HIGH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS TO RESIGN FROM THEIR OFFICIAL POSITIONS TO RUN FOR THE ANC.

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2. (C) CHAVEZ ALSO OBSERVED THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE "BATTLE"--AT THE MOMENT--IS NOT THE GOVERNMENT, BUT THE ANC, WHERE THE MVR AND ITS POLO PATRIOTICO ALLIES NEED TO PLACE THEIR BEST PEOPLE. THE RESIGNATIONS REFLECT CHAVEZ' ANXIETY AND UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE OUTCOME OF THE ANC ELECTIONS, AND COME ON THE HEELS OF THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COUNCIL'S (CNE) REJECTION OF MVR REQUESTS TO HAVE SYMBOLS PLACED NEXT TO CANDIDATES' NAMES (SEE REFTTEL). CHAVEZ ALSO PLEDGED TO TAKE PART IN THE "BATTLE" FOR THE ANC, BUT WILL LIKELY CAMPAIGN FOR THE PROCESS RATHER THAN INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATES, WHICH THE CNE HAS PROHIBITED. END SUMMARY.

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CHAVEZ SENDS HIS MINISTERS TO "THE FRONTLINE OF THE BATTLE"  
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3. (U) PRESIDENT CHAVEZ ANNOUNCED ON MAY 19 THAT MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR LUIS MIQUILENA, LABOR MINISTER LEOPOLDO PUCHI, ENVIRONMENT MINISTER ATALA URIANA POCATERRA, TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS MINISTER LUIS REYES REYES, AND DEPUTY MINISTER FRANCISCO VISCONTI WERE RESIGNING IN ORDER TO RUN FOR THE JULY 25 ANC ELECTIONS WHICH CHAVEZ CONSIDERED "THE NEXT FRONT OF THE FINAL BATTLE WHICH WILL UNMASK THE ENEMIES OF THE PEOPLE." THIS COMES ON THE HEELS OF HIS MAY 18 ANNOUNCEMENT THAT HIS MINISTER OF THE PRESIDENCY, ALFREDO PENA, WAS RESIGNING TO RUN FOR THE ANC. THE RESIGNATIONS COME AT THE REQUEST OF PRESIDENT CHAVEZ AND HE PERSONALLY PRAISED EACH CANDIDATE, TAKING THE TIME TO REMEMBER HIS PERSONAL ASSOCIATIONS WITH EACH ONE. PENA, MIQUILENA AND PUCHI WILL RUN AS NATIONAL CANDIDATES, URIANA WILL RUN AS A CANDIDATE FROM THE STATE OF ZULIA, REYES WILL RUN FROM THE STATE OF LARA, AND VISCONTI WILL RUN FROM

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THE STATE OF BARINAS.

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4. (U) DURING HIS ANNOUNCEMENT OF PENA'S RESIGNATION ON THE PREVIOUS DAY, CHAVEZ EXPRESSED REGRET BUT INDICATED THAT HE EXPECTED HIM TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN "UNMASKING" CANDIDATES CLAIMING TO BE INDEPENDENTS, AND ULTIMATELY WINNING A MAJORITY FOR THE POLO PATRIOTICO IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY. PUBLICLY ANNOUNCING HIS RESIGNATION, PENA WARNED AGAINST A "TROJAN HORSE, METAMORPHOSIZED TO HEAD-OFF REVOLUTIONARY CHANGES." HIS REMARKS ALSO REFLECTED CONCERN ABOUT THE POSSIBLE DIRECTION OF THE ANC, "WE WILL NOT LET THE ADVERSARIES SEIZE THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY," HE SAID; "IT IS A TASK FOR ALL THE VENEZUELANES WHO PLEDGED TO MAKE THE CHANGES."

5. (U) ALLUDING TO THE CONTROVERSY OVER HIS PARTICIPATION IN THE ANC CAMPAIGN, CHAVEZ ASSERTED THAT "NOBODY WILL PREVENT HIM FROM TAKING PART IN THE BATTLE FOR THE CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY," CLAIMING IT TO BE HIS RIGHT AND OBLIGATION. "WHO WOULD THINK THAT NOW THAT WE ARE LINING UP FOR BATTLE, I WOULD ABANDON MY POSITION; I WILL BE IN THE FRONT LINES OF THE BATTLE." HE IS ALSO, HOWEVER, REPORTED TO HAVE SAID THAT "ALTHOUGH HE CANNOT BE IN THE VANGUARD OF THE PROCESS, HE WILL FIGHT WHEREVER HE HAS TO, AND ACCORDING TO THE SITUATION." AT THE MOMENT, OBSERVED CHAVEZ, THE MOST IMPORTANT

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CIA WASHDC  
DIA WASHDC  
NSC WASHDC

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 CARACAS 001615

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SUBJECT: CHAVEZ ANNOUNCES RESIGNATION OF FIVE MINISTERS WHO WILL  
RUN FOR THE CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY

PART OF THE "BATTLE" IS NOT THE GOVERNMENT, BUT RATHER THE  
CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY, WHERE THE MVR NEEDS TO POSITION ITS BEST  
PEOPLE. CHAVEZ CONFIRMED THAT OTHER RESIGNATIONS WOULD BE  
FORTHCOMING DURING THE FOLLOWING HOURS AND DAYS.

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AND WHAT OF THE GOVERNMENT?  
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6. (U) DESPITE THE MASS RESIGNATIONS, CHAVEZ INSISTED THAT HIS  
GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO WORK AS NORMAL. HE DECLARED, "IF I  
HAVE TO STAY ALONE IN THE GOVERNMENT, THEN ALONE I WOULD STAY.  
[BUT] I DON'T INTEND TO STAND ALONE IN THIS GOVERNMENT. THIS IS A  
STRUCTURED ADMINISTRATION, MOVING ON WITH FIRM STEPS TOWARDS THE  
CONSOLIDATION OF ITS GOALS." HOWEVER, CHAVEZ STOPPED SHORT OF  
ANNOUNCING THE NAMES OF PROSPECTIVE MINISTERIAL REPLACEMENTS.

7. (C) IT IS EXPECTED THAT CHAVEZ WILL ANNOUNCE HIS CABINET  
REPLACEMENTS NEXT WEEK. IGNACIO ARCAYA, VENEZUELA'S AMBASSADOR TO  
THE UNITED NATIONS IS EXPECTED TO REPLACE MIOUILLENA AS MINISTER OF  
INTERIOR.

B1

WHILE PRESIDENT CHAVEZ REFUSED TO SPECULATE ABOUT SECRETARY  
OF THE PRESIDENCY PENA'S REPLACEMENT, SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT  
PROSECUTOR GENERAL JAVIER ELECHIGUERRA IS THE ODDS-ON FAVORITE FOR

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THAT POST. IT IS BELIEVED TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS MINISTER REYES WILL BE REPLACED EITHER BY PPT LEADER JULIO MONTES, WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN DIRECTOR FOR SERVICES FOR THE MUNICIPALITY OF CARACAS, OR VICE MINISTER OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT CARLOS GENATIOS. PPT ACTIVIST LUCIA ANTILLANO IS EXPECTED TO ASSUME THE URIANA'S ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO, ALTHOUGH SENIOR ENVIRONMENT OFFICIAL JESUS PEREZ IS ALSO SAID TO BE A POSSIBILITY FOR THE POST.

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